

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington,
Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

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WESTHAMPTON

Town vote on safety complex Feb. 27

By Shelby Macri

Selectboard Chairman Philip Dowling informed his fellow board members the Public Safety Complex received 11 bids for construction and will come before the town for a vote on Saturday, Feb. 27.

The town received 11 bids for the project's General Contractor on Jan. 22 and are happy with the lowest bidder. Dowling said contractors are looking for work and the numbers are aggressive and competitive right now; the town may not get this kind of opportunity on prices again.

"We need to start immediately; we have a nine-



A rendering of the proposed Public Safety Complex. Town voters will need to approve the project with a two-thirds vote at a special town meeting on Saturday, Feb. 27.

Courtesy Graphic

month schedule so that we can get the building finished before next winter," Dowling said. "The schedule has us breaking ground in Spring after we demolish the exist-

ing building."

The project will only come to fruition if the town approves it with a two-thirds debt exclusion vote at a special town meeting

on Feb. 27 at 1 p.m. in the Hampshire Regional High School Parking lot. The meeting will be held out-

COMPLEX, page 12

WORTHINGTON

Relief program raises 1,070 meals

By Peter Spotts

The community banded together during COVID-19 with generous donations helping serve 1,070 meals to people in need to date.

Donors helped raise more than \$18,000 for the effort. Meal costs have been kept to about \$5 per meal and are prepared and distributed by The Rabbit Hole Restaurant at the Fiddlehead Inn. Owner and Operator Hunt Chase and his family for their time and facilities for food preparation and resident Penny Molyneaux for her donation of baking cookies for each meal's dessert.

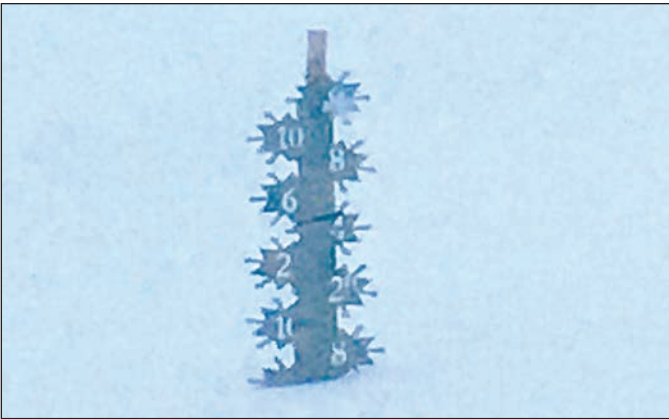
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In the storm



A buck digs for food as snow falls in Montgomery on Monday, Feb. 1.

Submitted photo by Pam Coe



A yard marker in Blandford measures the 18 inches of snow on the ground after Monday's snowstorm. More snowstorm photos on pages 8 and 9.

Photo by Mary Kronholm

HILLTOWNS

New Chester-Blandford Chief takes office

By Mary Kronholm

The Chester-Blandford Police Department has a new Chief of Police. Tammy Weidhass of Russell was named by both selectboards to take the position effective Feb. 1. She was sworn in Monday morning in Chester before the snow started falling across the region.

A special pinning and retirement ceremony for outgoing CBPD Chief Daniel Ilnicki along with Weidhaas'

swearing in ceremony, with many area police departments and State Police representatives invited to attend, was originally set for Monday evening, but had to be postponed until tonight, Thursday, Feb. 4, because of the storm.

Chester Selectboard Chair Barbara Pease Huntoon said, "On behalf of



Tammy Weidhass

the Chester Board of Selectmen, I want to express our sincerest thanks and appreciation to outgoing Chief Dan Ilnicki for his exemplary oversight of the Chester Blandford Police Department. In fact, Dan's tenure in Chester is one of the things that made our Board confident the merg-

er of the two departments would work."

She continued, "Dan is the epitome of professionalism but has always been approachable and an excellent communicator. He will be missed, and we wish him the very best in his retirement."

In speaking about the new police chief, Huntoon said, "We are excited Officer Tammy Weidhaas is taking

CHIEF, page 2

CHESTER

Town gathers info on vulnerabilities

By Shelby Macri

A frigid weekend wouldn't stop Westfield River Wild and Scenic Committee member Meredyth Babcock of Becket from meeting with residents about the town's Municipal Vulnerability Plan at the Chester Railway and Museum on Saturday, Jan. 30 and Sunday, 31.

Becket recently made their MVP and are an accepted community, a process Babcock was active in. They're

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HILLTOWNS

Community grants available for river protections



Stream Team explorers from the Becket-Washington School in Becket were funded by a Wild & Scenic Community Grant. Submitted photo

Vaccine sites set up in Amherst, Northampton

The local health departments of Hampshire County are pleased to share information about COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Hampshire County.

For years, the county been working together to establish plans for public health emergencies including mass dispensing. Strong partnerships, annual exercises, and robust stockpile of supplies have proved to be extremely useful in current response efforts. Recently, local first responders including police, fire, EMS, and dispatchers throughout Hampshire County were vaccinated. An effective clinic model to vaccinate members of the community safely and efficiently has been established.

Although health departments would like to offer as many different locations as possible, the COVID-19 vaccine storage, handling, administration and reporting requirements are significantly more complex than a traditional flu vaccine clinic. As a result, all vaccination sites will serve multiple communities from a region and must meet very specific requirements in order to receive vaccine. At this time, Hampshire County has two regional COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Hampshire County —The Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst and The Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street, Northampton.

The Department of Public Health has developed a vaccine distribution time-

line and it can be found at www.mass.gov. Both Amherst and Northampton sites have committed to provide vaccine distribution throughout all phases of the Commonwealth’s roll-out plan. Individuals who are eligible to receive the vaccine will be able to register via a link on the city websites www.amherstcovid19.org or www.northamptonma.gov/vaccine-clinics.

Additional clinics will be scheduled during the coming weeks based upon weekly federal and state allotments and will follow the phased guidelines as defined by The Department of Public Health. Eligible individuals can register online for an appointment. A second dose of the Moderna vaccine will be offered on or after 28 days later to anyone who receives their first dose at the clinics. If individuals need assistance with online registration, please call 413-587-1219 for Northampton or 413-259-2425 for Amherst and leave a detailed message. A health department representative will get respond within two business days.

Please note that the vaccine is free to individuals and is being provided to the states by the federal government. Sites can bill for a small administration fee to cover the cost of running clinic and insurance information will be requested. However, no person will be turned away due to lack of insurance.

Recycling game plan for football fans

With social distancing restrictions still in place, this year’s football fans will likely be celebrating differently this year, and HRMC is suggesting a change up for the big game recycling efforts as well.

During the Game (or for those who just like to tune into the commercials), many fans take this time to relax during the show and enjoy their traditional game day foods. HRMC offers these suggestions on how a household can make game watching a more sustainable, zero-waste event.

Regardless of which team someone is rooting for, HRMC encourages everyone to be part of the Green Team by following some simple tips.

When shopping for favorite foods, remember to shop with a re-usable shopping bag. While out stocking up on game day supplies, wear a re-usable cloth face-mask. When ordering for curbside pickup or for home delivery, don’t forget to flatten the shipping box prior to recycling.

Avoid using disposal tableware. Instead, choose reusable items for use such as glasses, plates, and cutlery.

If using individual beverage containers, don’t forget to recycle those plas-

tic bottles and cans but be sure they are empty and dry before placing them in the recycling bin. Many plastic containers are recyclable, but the food and liquid contained within them are not. Always make certain to clean all recyclable containers and remember that black plastic is not accepted at our regional recycling facility.

Doing take out on game day? New guidelines at our recycling facility allow for empty pizza boxes to be recycled, but pizza is not! Please remove all food items and the serving disk that the pizza sits on prior to recycling the box. If planning on ordering other take-out items, consider declining the single-use cutlery that is often part of a to-go order. Remember that Styrofoam food plates, cups, and containers are not recyclable.

Simplify sorting at clean up time by placing a trash bin adjacent to the recycling bin.

Join the Green Team by opting for these simple tips and check the Springfield MRF website at www.springfieldmrf.com to learn more about what is and isn’t acceptable in your recycling bin or visit hrmc-ma.org

The Wild & Scenic Westfield River Advisory Committee announced the availability of community grants ranging from \$500 to \$20,000 for work conducted through October 2021.

Recognizing the important role towns and local groups play in the protection of river resources, the funding supports activities that directly and measurably enhance and protect river resources or build strong local stewardship of the river and its tributaries.

Eligible entities include conservation commissions, planning boards, select boards, libraries, historical commissions, recreation departments, schools (including environmental clubs, art programs, science classes, etc.) and other town-sanctioned committees and boards.

Community-based nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations, such as historical societies, garden clubs, art associations, churches, local land trusts and neighborhood groups, are eligible. Partnerships, between towns, boards, organizations, etc., are encouraged. Individuals interested in applying should partner with either a town or nonprofit organizations.

Eligible towns include Becket, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Huntington, Middlefield, Savoy, Washington, Windsor, and Worthington. Interested parties are strongly encouraged to contact the committee prior to starting the application process to confirm their eligibility through Andrew Petitdemange at Andrew_Petit_de_Mange@nps.gov.

CHIEF

from page 1

over the helm from Chief Ilnick. In our interviews it became clear Officer Weidhaas is the best fit for the CBPD; she is devoted to public service and we look forward to the great things we know she will do for our towns!”

Chair of Blandford’s Select Board Cara Letendre added, “Chief Ilnick rose above our expectations in helping to create and merge the Chester Blandford Police Department. His unique style of community policing has given way to high standards for our new Chief to aspire to. I have full confidence that Chief Weidhaas will not only maintain these standards, but will impart her own passion and drive for the position and our communities.”

As far as retirement goes, Ilnick is “only retiring from law enforcement.” He said he plans to be involved and available on a consultative basis for CBPD and will be serving in various advisory rolls as the Commonwealth goes through law enforcement reforms.

“I will be continuing with my full-time employment as the senior manager of a regional field-based safety department with an insurance carrier,” he said, and he will definitely be spending more time with his family and enjoying the activities they like doing together.

Weidhaas, 41, is a well-seasoned police officer with over 18 years of experience and training in all phases of police work.

She has always known she wanted to be involved with police work. Her father was a part-time police officer in her hometown, Southampton. She remembered, as a youngster, sitting in the police cruiser while her dad, also a mechanic, was working on it.

She said “This is what I want to do.” She said she was in awe of her father as he wore his uniform, and added, “It’s all I ever wanted to do.”

A full-time officer for the City of Easthampton for 16 years, she decided she wanted a break, and left that department. After a short time, she realized how much she missed her job and learned of the part-time position avail-

able with the CBPD. She started with the department in December 2019.

As the new chief, she will serve full-time, 40 hours a week, and plans to split her time between the two towns.

“The time is fluid,” she said, depending on the needs and circumstances in either town.

Her many goals include making certain the officers are safe and are well trained. She expects to expand the force, considering the state’s Police Reform Legislation signed by Gov. Charlie Baker in December. There are other retirements from the force, too, which will require hiring new officers. She would like to see new personnel come with at least five years’ experience.

Forming a Police Association is important, too, and such an organization would allow the department to accept donations as well as make donations. Weidhaas would like to have a drug take-back box, one for each town police office, which would be “a safe place to dispose of old and unused prescriptions,” she said.

Long term, Weidhaas would like to establish herself and her officers as known members of the community.

“I want everyone to see the Police Department as humans; friendly faces,” she said. Plans include a community cookout with all public safety departments, and switch towns every year. She would like everyone to put a face to a name, and do the same for herself.

“That’s why I like the small town atmosphere, you know everyone and everyone knows you,” she said, and she really wants to get to know everyone.

She has received numerous lifesaving, meritorious conduct awards, and a Medal of Valor from the Easthampton Police Department for preventing a victim of multiple stab wounds from bleeding out from two arterial bleeds.

In her spare time, Weidhaas is a runner and has run nine full marathons and 40 to 50 half-marathons in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. She works out at the gym to stay fit and enjoys high-intensity exercise.

News, photo publication policy

As a community newspaper our focus has always been local news. While we try very hard to run upcoming events as a public service whenever space allows, space does not allow us to run an upcoming event repeatedly. Our policy is to limit publication of upcoming events to one article in advance of the event and, space permitting, a second brief reminder article the week prior to an event, and to run those articles in only one section of the paper, and not in multiple sections simultaneously.

All such public service announcements and photos are subject to space limitations and deadlines, therefore publication cannot be guaranteed. Whenever copy for the week exceeds allotted space, news copy will take priority, and public service copy is the first area to be cut. We also reserve the right to edit for style and space, and are under no obligation to print lists of sponsorships, or articles that arrive after deadline, unless time and space allows. **Deadline is Monday at NOON**, on holidays it is **Friday at 2 p.m.**

HILLTOWNS

Hilltown Food Bucks helps with local food

Hilltown Community Development has partnered with local retailers and farm stands to set up Hilltown Food Bucks, a local effort to help Hilltown residents stretch their food dollars while supporting our critical local food businesses in a difficult time of social and economic stress. 170 households have participated in the program to date, receiving upwards of \$50,000 coupons to spend at local farm stands and grocery stores since July 2020.

“This is a win-win for our community,” said Kate Bavelock, director of Community Programs at Hilltown CDC. “We know that keeping our dollars in the community is essential for the survival of our small farms and businesses, but staying closer to home also keeps us all safer. We are fortunate to have

had a low incidence of COVID transmission in the Hilltowns, and making locally grown and available food more affordable allows us to protect each other while keeping good food on our families’ tables.”

Eligible participants can receive between \$100 to \$125 food coupons per month for five months to be used at participating local stores and farms on non-taxable food items. The coupons double spending power when making a purchase, so a shopping basket worth \$80 can be paid for with \$40 of coupons and \$40 of your own money.

To be eligible, you must live in one of the towns served through the HCDC Community Block Grant —Ashfield, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington,

Middlefield, Montgomery, Plainfield, Williamsburg and Worthington. Residents who are age 62 years or older, have a child enrolled in Free and Reduced School Meals, are a resident of low-income housing, or are eligible for LIHEAP are highly encouraged to apply.

Program funding is limited and will expire in May 2021. If someone is interested in participating, please complete the one-page application available at hilltowncdc.org/foodbucks. For questions on the Hilltown Food Bucks program, please contact Bavelock at kateb@hilltowncdc.org or 413-296-4536 x 116.

Participating Retailers include the Blandford Country Store, 98 Main Street, Blandford; Chester Village Market, 191 Route 20, Chester; Corners Grocery Store – 2 Packard Common, Worthington; Chesterfield General Store, 432 Main Road, Chesterfield; Old Creamery Co-op, 445 Berkshire Trail (Route 9), Cummington, Moltenbrey’s Market, 44 Worthington Road, Huntington; Williamsburg Market, 12 Main St., Williamsburg.

Participating farm stands include Crabapple Farm, 100 Bryant St., Chesterfield, call ahead to use HIP; Cream of the Crop Farmstand, 601 Blandford Road, Russell, Four Corners Farm – 27 Old North Road, Worthington; Good Bunch Farm, 221 North River Road, Shelburne Falls; Hart Farm, 585 South Shirkshire Road, Conway; Intervale Farm, 106 South Road, Westhampton; and Sawyer Farm, 19 Sawyer Road, Worthington (online ordering & curbside pickup only).

HRMC offers guidance on the proper use and disposal of needles and syringes

There are many people in Western Massachusetts using syringes to manage their health care or pet care at home and the Hilltown Resource Management Cooperative wants to raise awareness to know about the safe use and disposal of needles, syringes and lancets (sharps).

According to Massachusetts Sanitary Code, needles, syringes, and sharps containers may not be thrown in the trash or in recycling bins. Medical waste regulations concerning sharps apply to both personal and veterinary use.

For smart storage use a sharps container. A sharps container is a single-use container that is filled with used medical needles and then disposed of safely. These can be purchased at pharmacies, medical supply stores or ordered through the mail. Mail-back services such as Stericycle, which can be reached at 800-355-8773 or mystericycle.com and Medasend, 800-200-3581 or medasend.com, provide for resident accounts and offer a variety of container sizes and prepaid mailing cartons.

To protect household members, the community, environment, family, friends and foraging animals, the proper disposal

of needles and syringes is important. Put used syringes in a sharps container immediately. Keep needles away from children and pets. Bring along a sharps container when traveling.

Smart disposal can be done at collection and drop off centers. Filled sharps containers must be disposed of at a drop-off site or through a medical mail-back service. Collection programs are available in many towns; contact the local Board of Health to see if they have a collection site. If a community doesn’t have a sharps disposal program, the Tapestry Health at 16 Center Street, Northampton, offers a sharps program that is available for hilltown residents. For further information, contact the Tapestry Health at 413-586-0310.

Never place sharps or sharps containers in the recycling. This is hazardous to the haulers and individuals working at the transfer station and the municipal recycling facility. Do not flush sharps down the toilet or drop into storm drains. Do not clip or bend needles.

Everyone can do their part to reduce the risk of blood-borne diseases like hepatitis and HIV/AIDS by properly handling and disposing of sharps.

HUNTINGTON

Winter funtivities continue with puzzle pick up

HUNTINGTON — Families with the winter blues, looking for a family activity, or wanting a friendly competition to do with friends should check out the new Puzzle Pick-Up.

This free event is offered by the Huntington Recreation Commission. Puzzles are 300 to 500 piece and limited to one per family.

Contact Huntingtonrec@gmail.com or 413-667-0085 and leave a name, address and phone number to reserve a puzzle by Saturday, Feb. 6. Safe puzzle pick up will be at the Huntington Library parking lot on Saturday, Feb. 13, between 2-3 p.m. Masks are required and occupants must stay in their car.

NORWICH HILL

The First Congregational Church of Huntington reminds everyone even though our physical doors are closed until further notice, we are most definitely open for worship, praise, ministry, and fellowship. We are an Open and Affirming Church inviting, welcoming and affirming everyone — seekers, believers, and wonderers alike — on their journey of faith, to join in 10 a.m. Zoom Sunday worship.

In our reading for the fifth Sunday after Epiphany, Mark 1:29-39, we see Jesus deeply involved in addressing human need, and are invited to wonder how it is that we follow his lead. We will be celebrating The Lord’s Supper/Communion during the

Zoom worship service.

The pastor is always available to speak with you. If you do not receive our emails and would like to connect with our Zoom worship service and/or fellowship time, please contact Pastor Carol at firstchurchofhuntington@gmail.com to receive the information you will need to participate or send us a message on Facebook.

Please use the phone numbers and email address provided to stay in touch or to contact the pastor. You are also invited to find us on Facebook at “Norwich Hill” for updates, information and spiritual encouragement. For more information, please contact 413-667-3935 or 860-798-7771 or firstchurchofhuntington@gmail.com.

In Memory of
Abe Forish
6/20/71 - 2/3/11



Those we love
remain with us,
for love itself
lives on.
Mom



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◆ **La Cucina di Hampden House**
1 Allen Street, Hampden, MA
413-566-8324
www.lacucinahampden.com
CURRENT HOURS: Mon-Thurs 3-8pm;
Sat 2-9pm; Sun 2-8pm
Lounge open & pizza available 7 days

◆ **Route 20 Bar & Grille**
2341 Boston Road (The Wilbraham Shops)
Wilbraham, MA
413-279-2020
www.route20barandgrille.com
CURRENT HOURS: Lunch: Thurs-Sat starting at 11:30am; Dinner: Tues-Thurs 4-9pm; Fri & Sat 4-10pm; Sunday 11:30am-7:00pm; Sunday Brunch 11:30am-2:30pm

◆ **Donovan's Irish Pub**
Eastfield Mall, 1655 Boston Road, Springfield, MA
413-543-0791
www.donovanspub.com
CURRENT HOURS: Thurs-Sat 11am-9pm; Sun 9am-7pm; Sunday breakfast 9am - noon

◆ **Venice Pizza & Grill**
2341 Boston Road, The Wilbraham Shops
Wilbraham, MA
413-540-8080
www.venicepizzagrill.com
OPEN: Tues-Thurs 10:45am-9:30pm
Fri & Sat 10:45am -10pm; Sun 11am-9pm
Closed Monday



Send Us Your Photos!
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OPINION

EDITORIAL

Western Mass. needs more COVID vaccine sites

Phase II of the Massachusetts COVID-19 vaccination program rolled out Monday. The bleak weather that ushered in the new week turned out to be an apt metaphor for the plan so far, especially if you reside in Western Mass.

Due to a lack of supply of the vaccine and high demand by residents waiting to be inoculated, prioritizing which residents are first in line makes sense. Healthcare workers, first responders, and other categories of people facing the highest risk were designated for the first phase. The second phase prioritizes those age 75 and older, followed by seniors age 65 and up, people with certain underlying conditions, then other front-line workers, such as grocery store staff and teachers. Everyone else is expected to become eligible in April, assuming enough vaccine doses are available.

That part of the plan is sound. We'll even say it's fair because the most vulnerable among us and those doing essential work who can't do their jobs while quarantining should be protected first while waiting for vaccine production to catch up with demand.

What's lacking is a plan for mass inoculation sites in Western Mass. If you take a look at the distribution site map on mass.gov, you'll see a lone red star, which represents a mass site, in our entire region. Most of what you'll see are green stars signifying local health care providers and blue stars that are effectively wishful thinking because those are for pharmacies and right now, none of our local chains are offering shots.

Hampden County alone has over 466,000 residents, yet Eastfield Mall in Springfield is the one mass vaccination site. Glance over toward Boston on the distribution map and there's a solid wall of red stars, most notably Fenway Park and Gillette Stadium.

How ironic that the part of the Commonwealth with the most open space hasn't been leveraged to create pop-up vaccination clinics. Yes, you could practically fit all of Chicopee into Fenway while filling Gillette with the combined populations of Pittsfield and Ludlow, but what we lack in sheer numbers we make up for with resources.

Fred Ferguson, owner of Palmer Motorsports Park, said he'd gladly open his facility for use as an inoculation site if asked. Brimfield has acres of fields where flea markets are held in-season that could be temporarily repurposed. Not to mention farms just about everywhere that could be suitable.

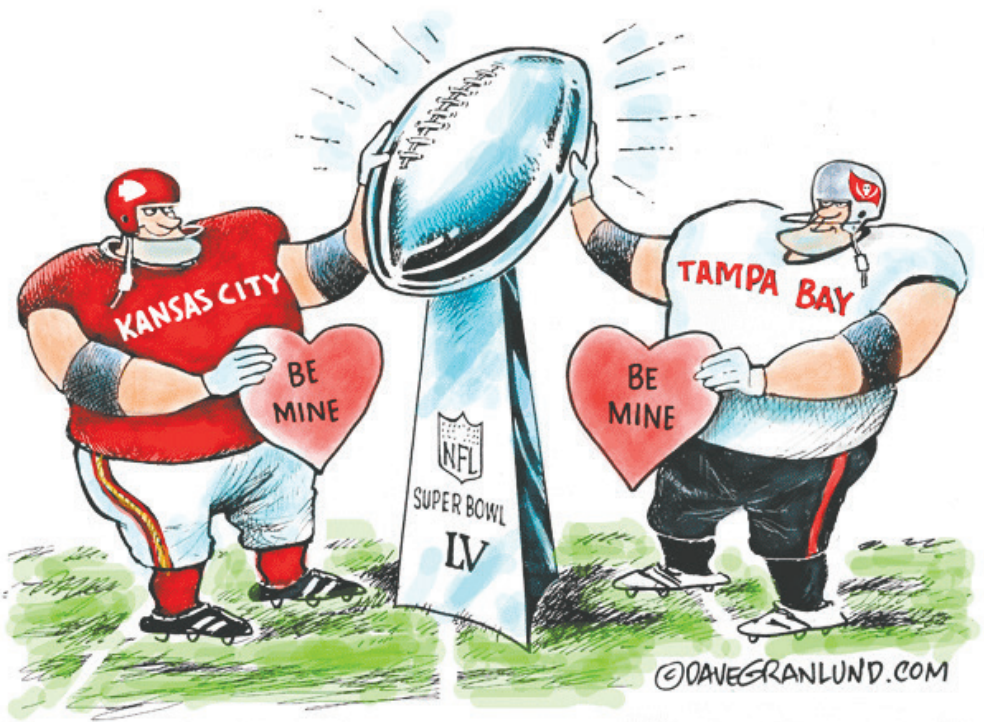
There's a long list of possibilities if the COVID-19 Task Force would only consider expanding access in our region. And it should.

Another improvement we'd like to see is the sign-up process. The online portal set up to request a shot opened to poor reviews, especially from the senior citizen segment, who found it less than user-friendly. Despite Gov. Charlie Baker's exasperated retort that it couldn't possibly be any easier, the fact is too many seniors couldn't navigate it.

In response, state senators Eric Lesser and Anne Gobi led a bipartisan effort to prod the Taskforce into setting up a special 1-800 call center to book appointments. Baker seemed agreeable and hopefully by next week if not sooner, that centralized system will be up and running. Time is of the essence when working to end a pandemic and the more those eligible in this phase are encouraged to sign up for the vaccine, the better off we'll all be.

Primarily though, the task force needs a plan to create more mass sites in our region. Those eligible now deserve more options for getting their initial shot and eventual booster. And hopefully, by phase III, everyone still waiting to be inoculated can do that quickly and without having too travel far.

Just because we're rural, doesn't mean we want to be more vulnerable to COVID-19 than our fellow citizens to the east.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Giving thanks to the Highlands Footpath

I am so grateful for all the work done by the Highlands Footpath Collaborative in the Chester-Blandford State Forest: the building of kiosks, installing stone benches, and especially close to my heart, the restoration of the Newman Marsh Trail, named for my beloved father. This August marks the 25th year since my dynamic dad died. It means a lot to me and my family that he is remembered in Chester, a town he loved. I hope to hike the trail this summer myself. Overall, I am very impressed by the

Collaborative's larger goal to connect the three state forests from Lee to Goshen. It's a brilliant idea. Thank you to those members of the Collaborative that I read in the Country Journal including Andy Myers, Jeff Penn, Chet Bret, Liz Massa and Meredyth Babcock. P.S. I regret to read the kiosks were recently vandalized, but glad to see they were immediately restored.

Mandy Marsh Szkotak
Subscriber

Hike information available online

This letter is in response to "Hike photos provide chance to find new places," The Country Journal, Jan. 28.

Sarah, we are so glad to hear you enjoy our Western Mass Hilltown Hikers photos! In response to your request for trail maps that go alongside the photos, they can be found on our website. Please note that our adventures also include old Hilltown Roads and historic places where there may not be maps available. We try our best to specify where our photos are taken and what they are of. Our group is dedicated to promoting and at the same time preserving Hilltown

History, our beautiful natural resources, and wildlife in the Western Mass region. We offer more information on all our social media platforms; Facebook, Facebook Groups, Instagram, Twitter, Blog, Meetup, YouTube and our website www.western-masshilltownhikers.com. We have a large catalog of trail maps and trail reviews as well as history documentation that is free and available to all. Thank you.

Liz Massa
Director, Western Mass Hilltown Hikers
Chester

We, not 'fake news,' caused hate, violence

This letter is in response to "Fake news fuels divisive rhetoric," The Country Journal, Jan. 28.

Mr. Cousineau, I find it disappointing to make the assumption that divisive rhetoric has only come from one side. A positive step to begin ending the existing extreme divisiveness that exists on both sides would be to implement a new law similar to the "Fairness Doctrine" that applied to broadcast licenses prior to its abolition in 1987. This law should apply to all media organizations registered through the FCC, not just broadcast stations, and should mimic the current federal equal time laws which apply to political candidates. I am aware of the trickiness surrounding the wording of such a law, especially given the first amendment ramifications. This law would not eliminate the rights of individuals to express any and all opinions, rather it would ensure that others are also allowed to speak their minds. For purposes of the "greater good" would it not be beneficial for those individuals or ideas being attacked to have the ability to respond or responded to in equivalent time? As it is now, I find myself watching newscasts on two different channels just to try and hear both sides of any story.

I blame us for what exists today. I agree with Mr. Cousineau that the current news only shows what sells. The prosperous business of feeding large amounts of only what we desire to hear has led to two huge factions of people that only believe what they are fed to believe. In discussing

the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote "Governments are not founded in order to create new rights and arbitrarily dispense benefits upon preferred groups, but to secure rights that existed before governments were ever created." I would argue it is our right to hear all sides.

As a fiscal conservative, social liberal that has no idea what it means to be a Democrat or a Republican anymore, I find it harder and harder to make a clear choice when voting every four years. No matter the channel, it was Trump's own words and actions that led me to believe he was unfit to serve as President. I do not wish to spend time listing the hundreds of lies spewed from the mouth of the former Michigan "Man of the Year" (okay, just one) as it no longer matters given our country should be focused on moving forward. I will agree with Mr. Cousineau that there are lies from the other side as well. While I do not share all of my sons' opinions regarding the Democratic party as expressed in his Jan. 21st letter, I do take pride in knowing he always researches and listens to opposing views prior to formulating an opinion. I think if more took the time to do so, the level of divisiveness would diminish. What a great opportunity for the renewed claims of bipartisanship to create the possibility of ensuring both sides get the chance to be heard.

Jason Forgue
Chester

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor should be 500 words or less in length. We require letter writers to include his or her name, town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources.

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OPINION

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Unraveling the History of Mittens

By Deborah Daniels

Did you see those bear paw mittens Bernie Sanders sported at the inauguration ceremony? Didn't they inspire you to take up knitting, almost? What a statement he made, not just celebrate mend and make do, Yankee thrift, but recycle and reuse with a purpose, save the planet, one fashionable mitten at a time. Bernie's mittens were made by Jen Ellis, a Vermont teacher who used yarn from a repurposed wool sweater and a fleece lining made from recycled plastic bottles. She gave these to him over two years ago. She is no longer knitting mittens. She referred all the calls from people wanting a pair of these mittens to her former business partner who helped design the original pair.

What is the history of mittens? That is difficult to say because wool biodegrades quickly so mitten samples from long ago are scarce. But, also, because knitting history is handed down from generation to generation, folklore style and not documented well for posterity. The oldest mitten, over 1,000 years old, was found in Latvia, on the Baltic Sea in eastern Europe. Apparently Latvian women have been knitting patterns into mittens full of symbolism that represent a kind of written history. Mittens are part of their national costume.

The Smithsonian has an interesting pair of mittens that they date to 1803 because of a reference in an American diary, how knitting a fringe at the wrist was a popular style then. There is another unique property, there is a poem knitted into them. It starts at the wrist and spirals down one mitten and finishes on the next. Heavens what industry, this mystery Madame Lafarge had! The thumbs identify the poet as William Watson. He also could be verified as a London printer, known to have published a "penny paper" from 1805 to 1830 that contained a story, a poem and a woodcut image.

The poem reads "One thing you must not borrow nor give away. For he who borrows trouble will have it every day. But if you have a plenty and more then you can bear. It will not lighten yours. If others have a share. You must learn to be contented then will your trouble cease. And then you may be certain that you will live in peace. For a contented mind is a continual feast."

The Selbu mitten that symbolizes Norway has a well-documented beginning. A shepherdess in 1857 first used two wool colors to knit the Selba rose or eight-sided star design into a mitten. Her name was Marit Emstad. The design caused a sensation among knitters who copied it to the tune of over 300 registered variations in this pattern. It is known as Selbuvotten, see photo of maroon and gray mittens. You always see a version of this mitten at the winter Olympics.

Then there is Abbie Condon who won a contract to make mittens for Civil War soldiers for 25 cents a pair. She recruited women from all over the northeast to knit mittens. She supplied the wool and then collected and shipped the mittens south by steamboat from Penobscot, Maine. This was a very successful cottage industry for women, sending 15,000 dozen pairs of mittens. After the war ended the price of mittens dropped to 6 cents a pair. Abbie Condon persevered and kept women knitting from homes until 1882 when knitting machines came on the scene. She invested in four machines, then bought a factory and expanded into 150 machines. By 1906 she was using six tons of woolen yarn to make 96,000 mittens/year.

Women again responded to wartime by knitting mittens for soldiers in WWI. This was a voluntary effort by local communities across America. Handmade mittens spoke a loud message of caring to soldiers a long way from home. It would be interesting to know if any of these mittens were trigger mittens. They were so called because they left the index finger and thumb separated in their own sheath, so the trigger finger was free to shoot a gun. Alas, there is no documentation to support this. These mittens might have been a bit tricky to knit. Certainly, they looked like mutant mittens and in the hands of less experienced knitters, well let's not go there. The dough boys had enough to contend with. World War II put those citizen knitters back to work again, knitting socks this time for the American Red Cross to distribute to soldiers.

There was another mitten popular in the North country and not much seen today called choppers. Woodsman, fisherman and hunters liked this mitten because it was made of deer or elk



A pair of homespun wool mittens with a poem woven into the pattern. This design dates back to circa 1803.

Photo Courtesy of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History



A pair of knitted mittens with the Selbu rose, eight-sided star pattern in them and mitten garters. Submitted photos by Deborah Daniels



A poster from WWII. Photo Courtesy of the American Red Cross



A knit kit replica of WWII knitting kit to make socks for soldiers.

prevented that lost mitten syndrome so prevalent among kids and Peter Rabbit? There was also that clamp device that did the same job, what was that called? Keep warm this winter, wear your mittens and if they are hand knitted, know you are loved and warm.

Do you have a memory or historical curiosity from the Hilltowns that you'd like to share with your neighbors? Send your story and photos to countryjournal@turley.com.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Amendment needed for Supreme Court

The election is over, the votes are in and counted, the new President and Congress sworn in and starting to work. However, there is a bit of leftover business - the Supreme Court. Article Three of the United States Constitution establishes the judicial branch of the federal government. Under Article Three, the judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court of the United States, as well as lower courts created by Congress. It does not address the size of the court nor the duration of appointments. Over the centuries the Court has served our country well. However, the recent manipulations over appointments, although legal, demonstrate, to me, that it's time to more fully address the Court in the Constitution by adopting the following amendment.

Proposed Amendment to the United States Constitution:

The Supreme Court of the United States shall have nine justices, one Chief Justice and eight associate Justices.

Justices shall be appointed for a single term of 18 years or to serve the remaining term of their predecessor if the predecessor did not complete their

18-year term. No Justice may serve more than 27 years on the court.

The term of one Justice shall expire on September 30 of every odd numbered year. No later than 30 days of a vacancy occurring on the court the President shall nominate a qualified individual to fill that vacancy. Within 60 days of receiving the nomination from the President, the Senate shall vote on the candidate.

The current Justices shall draw lots to determine when their term ends. However, since they were appointed for life, they may continue to serve on the Court until they choose to retire or die. The date of the term completion of Justice who replaces the departing Justice will be that of the lot the previous justice had drawn.

I feel an amendment like this would serve several purposes. It would settle the question of how many justices should serve on the court. The court has had nine justices for much of its history and it works.

Why a term limit of 18 years. It would give a Justice plenty of opportunity to become familiar with the working

of the court and make her or his mark. It also lends itself to replacing one Justice every two years which would provide an orderly and regular infusion of new blood to the court. This should add stability to the rulings of the court. It would ensure that every president has at least two selections to the bench but, except in the case of the death or early retirement of a sitting Justice, no president can appoint a majority of the Justices. If a Justice is appointed to fill an unexpired term of nine years or less, they would be eligible to be reappointed to the Court.

By law, the U.S. Supreme Court's term begins on the first Monday in October and goes through the Sunday before the first Monday in October of the following year. The Court is, typically, in recess from late June/early July until the first Monday in October. By having Justices terms end on September 30, the Justice would be there to complete the term and the new Justice could be seated prior to the start of the next term. Knowing when a Justice would be retiring gives the President a target date to nominate the next Justice; it could be 4 months prior to the retirement. It

gives Congress a schedule to follow in conducting hearings and prevents them from sitting on a nomination because they don't like the nominee's opinions.

Drawing lots as to who has what term ending date is an arbitrary, but unbiased, method for setting up the rotation schedule. There could be other acceptable methods. Since the current Justices are appointed for life, I feel it would be unfair to change the rules now and force them out thus they can stay on till they choose to leave.

As a citizen I am distressed by the polarization on the high Court and talks of remedying that be packing the Court. Distressed by the way Congress manipulates the system for their own ends. A President has a right and an obligation to nominate individuals who generally reflect their values and opinions. Congress has an obligation to act on these nominations. I feel this proposed amendment will help the Court be a balanced, reflective and respected institution.

E. Patrick Storey, Jr.
Subscriber

OPINION

How to grow nutritious sweet potatoes



The sweet potato is a nutritional powerhouse. According to www.nutritiondata.com, it is “low in sodium, and very low in saturated fat and cholesterol. It is also a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin B6 and potassium, and a very good source of vitamin A, vitamin C and manganese.” If these facts aren’t reason enough to try adding this veggie to our garden this growing season, delight in the fact that it is also a very pretty vine.

If my memory is correct, my Mom attempted to grow sweet potatoes one

summer when I was child. It wasn’t all that impressive as I recall, at least not as impressive as her peanut growing experiment! Anyhow, the one thing we have against us is that sweet potatoes require a long growing season, somewhere between 90-150 days. The tender shoots are cold sensitive, and must be planted into the ground after all danger of frost has passed.

In our area we use Memorial Day as our “frost-free date.” Then, the edible root, aka the sweet potato, must be harvested before the first frost of fall. By my records, the first frost usually occurs in early October. This equates to 100 days bare minimum of growing time. Still

GARDEN, page 14



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RUSSELL

February is friendship at library

RUSSELL — The Russell Public Library plush penguin mascots Poppy and Jewel suggest reading the following books that can be found in the library.

Read Steven Kellogg’s “Best Friends” picture book about two best friends named Kathy and Louise. They have an extraordinary relationship, until Louise heads to summer camp. Readers will never guess how Kathy handles the situation of her leaving. Another humorous story written by Kellogg, with marvelous pictures, and there is

even an imaginary horse named Golden Silverwind. “The Rainbow Fish,” written by Marcus Pfister, is a beautifully illustrated children’s book about a unique fish with rainbow colors and shimmering fish scales. He makes his way through the ocean and ends up on a friendship journey. Read the book to find out what happens when he’s on his journey. Friendship themed craft bags are available for all to enjoy.

Visit the library or call for curbside pick-up to reserve a one of these books.

HOLY FAMILY PARISH

Holy Family Parish in Russell will be foregoing the usual scheduled Mardi Gras gathering to begin the Lenten season for this year. We are hoping 2022 will present the opportunity to return to where we may all gather to celebrate and enjoy each other’s company favorite dishes.

Ash Wednesday falls on February 17 this year. Masses will be held at 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. on that day. Due to the pandemic, ashes will not be placed on the foreheads in the form of a cross. Instead, blessed ashes will be distributed in small packets at the end of the Ash Wednesday Masses. Father Ron would

like to encourage everyone to carry the ashes with you all during the Lenten season as a reminder of the inner changes that need to occur within ourselves to hear God’s message which will enable us to implement unity and solidarity and be a sign of reconciliation with each other.

Any parishioner who would like ashes but will not be attending Mass on Ash Wednesday may request them by contacting Father Ron at 413-862-4418 or by email at holyfamily@russellma.net. Please leave a message with your name and address. Ashes may be mailed or be a contactless drop off at your home. Please let Father know your preference.

OTIS

Beat boredom with the buster box

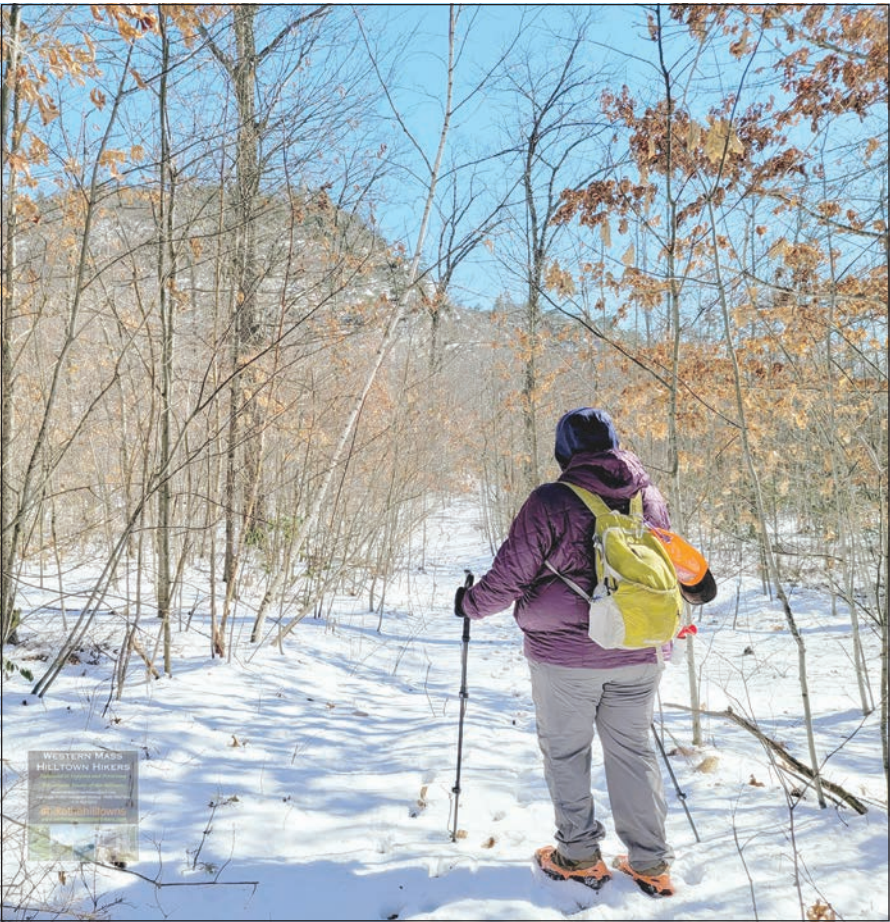
OTIS — Stave off boredom with the Winter Boredom Buster Box sponsored by the Otis recreation Commission and Otis Library & Museum.

The box includes winter arts and crafts, creativity for kid’s kit, puzzle, puzzle book, and a valentine surprise. Boxes are first come, first served, with a limit of one per household due to limited quantities.

To register for a box, visit townof-tisma.com. The cost is \$15 for Otis residents and taxpayers and \$25 for non-Otis residents. Check payment is preferred. Payment is due at the time of registration to secure a box. When registering, select a pick-up time on the registration form — Wednesday, Feb.10, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. or Saturday, Feb. 13, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

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WINTER WALK



Karen McTaggart explores the lower Tekoa trail in her hometown, Russell, on a sunny, snowy weekend afternoon.

Submitted photo

MONTGOMERY

Kid’s winter event Aesop’s Fables miniature 3D puppet theatre

MONTGOMERY — The Montgomery Library is hosting a new craft and Zoom Program with Mary Jo Maichack, professional singer & storyteller, as seen on PBS and National Storytelling Network. Pick up a kit at the library to make this cute theatre — colors and design may vary.

Kids will make their own puppet theatre to play with over and over on Monday, Feb. 15, at 2 p.m. on Zoom via Grace Hall Memorial Library. For Zoom login information, contact the

library at montgomerylibrary@yahoo.com.

Find all the latest additions to the library at Wowbrary. You can easily sign up at wowbrary.org for our weekly newsletter which delivers all the newest items right to your inbox.

The library has Appointment & Curbside Service on Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Thursdays 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Just contact montgomerylibrary@yahoo.com or 413-862-3894.

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Snowed in



North Blandford Road is all clear on Tuesday, Feb. 2, after Monday's massive snowfall across the town.



North Street is lined with tall snowpiles after the plows passed through.



The Turnpike by Old Chester Road features snow piles a couple feet tall along the fences.

Photos by Mary Kronholm

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North Street cars wait to be dug out.



Even the birds were snowed in during the storm.



A couple cars on Old Chester Road need to be dug out after being blocked in by the plows.

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BLANDFORD

WINTER HUNTING



A fox carries dinner back home during a snowstorm in Blandford.
Submitted photo by Joyce Collins

Historical Society Program airs tonight on Zoom at 7 p.m.

BLANDFORD — On Thursday, Feb. 4, at 7 p.m., Dennis Picard will give a Blandford Historical Society Zoom presentation on One-Room Schoolhouses, revealing what education might have been like in these one-room schoolhouses.

Over the past twenty years, Picard has been in contact with many Historical Societies and Museums that maintain one-room schoolhouses, and has sampled the type of programming they offer. He has visited more than one hundred still extant examples and served as a consultant on the moving and restoration of two. He has also lectured at many sites throughout New England and acted as a panel moderator and workshop presenter at the Northern Illinois University’s 2001 One-room Schooling Conference.

Picard will share the history, legends and myths about what was called “district” school education. One-room schoolhouses were the norm in New England before the adoption of the graded elementary system in the latter half of the 19th century. In 1802, Blandford had 14 one-room schools, and the Historical Society is housed in one.

To join the Zoom meeting, use the Zoom application and use meeting ID 831 5089 3878 with the passcode 464127. The program will be recorded and available at a later date on YouTube.

CHESTER

INFO

from page 1

currently writing their action grant and want to work with Chester and possibly do a joint plan that could help both towns.

“I try to listen to the community. I invite people in to share information on their community, what their vulnerabilities and strengths are,” Babcock said. “I want Chester to work on this and become an accepted community. We want to work with them because they have similar issues.”

Babcock brought a map of Chester to the Railway Station so that residents could pint out or mark areas on the map that need help, or places they see as a vulnerability. The map also allowed people to outline the town’s strengths and areas that can be used to the town’s advantage, or ways to solve issues and vulnerabilities without building a foreign structure in nature.

These issues and vulnerabilities being water ways and the railroad, as Chester experiences floods occasionally and has many flood plains around town. Babcock and Fire Chief Richard Small spoke about possible options to fix the bridge on Main Street or to divert water into flood plains around town to pull water from the center of town. They also discussed the railroad in town and how Chester will be included in the new railroad connected from the Hilltowns to Boston.

Babcock is offering her help with Chester’s MVP as her town has already made their plan and are working on their water issues as well. She believes that as Chester’s neighbor, the two towns can work together in the coming years on a joint planning action grant especially for the shared water ways in town. Small, who has been the Fire Chief for 15 years, has seen the dam overflow multiple times, especially with heavy rainfall and past hurricanes as Chester has many flood plains in town.

Selectman Richard Holzman also visited Babcock and spoke about the possible solutions for floods and diverting

water in town. Holzman provided information on who owns areas of land and ways they could use the towns land to solve vulnerability areas rather than building dams or bridges. Holzman did mention they should look into fixing the Main Street bridge as it’s seen a few floods over the years and has a weight limit with the stress it’s seen. Small said they did some repairs on the bridge throughout the years and it’s helped and solved issues, but it’d be beneficial to the town to redo the bridge and make it stronger rather than waiting to fix another issue.

Small and Babcock agreed that they should look at the costs and numbers of fixing these vulnerable areas to present to the residents of Chester, but that they should also show the costs of an alternative of not spending the money now. This includes showing how it’ll effect the town to not invest money now, and how it could be more expense in the future if they don’t participate in the MVP. Residents who want to help with town information, or who want to learn more about the MVP can visit the town website, townofchester.net. There is further information on the main page under “Resilient Chester MVP Sign Up,” as the motto for creating the MVP is being resilient to the town’s vulnerabilities and being ready to solve them. Babcock said that there will be an MVP Workshop in late March or early April.

“We will be conducting three evening Zoom sessions but the more we can gather from community members beforehand, the more accurate and helpful the plan will be for the community,” Babcock said. “Folks can sign up on the town’s website for information, updates, and a link to an online mapping tool if they prefer that to attending on of my outreach sessions.” Babcock’s job is to connect with the residents to hear from them, listen to them, and understand their town’s needs. Babcock feels that the MVP can benefit Chester a great amount and is encouraging people to sign up for more information.



Chester Fire Chief Richard Small gives information on town flooding issues to Westfield River Wild and Scenic Committee member Meredyth Babcock as part of an information gathering phase for the town’s Municipal Vulnerability Plan at the Chester Railroad Station on Saturday, Jan. 30.

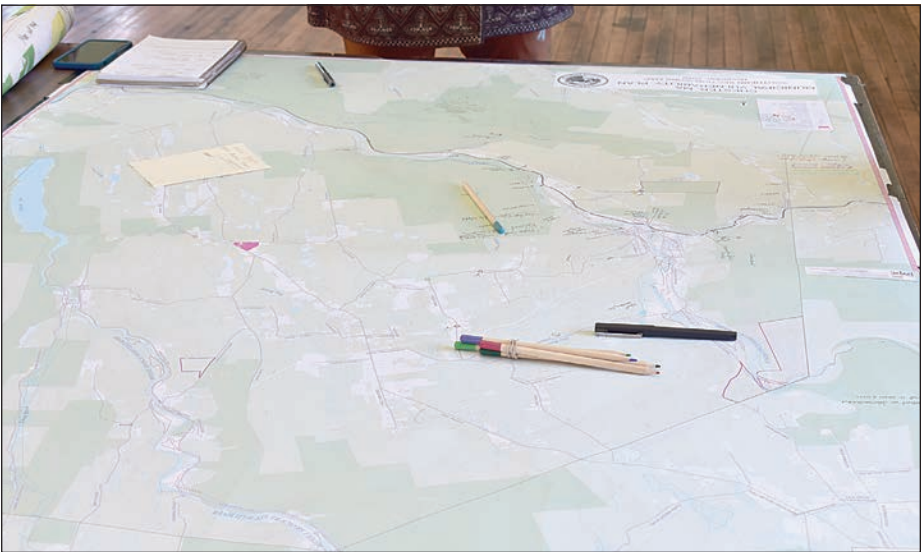
Photos by Shelby Macri



Selectman Richard Holzman, left, joins Chester Fire Chief Richard Small and Meredyth Babcock for the discussion.



Chester Fire Chief Richard Small and Meredyth Babcock examine a topographical map of the town.



Meredyth Babcock records all input from residents on a map of the town to highlight strengths and weaknesses.

3

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January 7, 2021 | Vol. 42, No. 37 | 75¢

WESTHAMPTON

Collectors
work on
tax bill
solution

By Shelby Macri

The Selectboard discussed a variety of issues during their first meeting of the year on Monday, Jan. 4, including a small error in information with tax bills. Tax Collector Patricia Cotton just started as the collector on Friday, Jan. 1. Cotton said board members that she met with the previous tax collector, Ann Macri-Knox, on her proposed last day, Thursday, Dec. 31, where the two ran into a problem with tax bills. Cotton said she received calls from someone who received bills for property that were sold two-and-a-half years ago. "We're not quite sure what's going on, we're going to have to meet with the assessor," Cotton said. "We don't know if the file was wrong, we don't know if it's just one or if it's going to be more than that." She added neither her or Knox know the extent of the errors and they will both

TAX, page 3

Lake Life

Littleville Lake in Huntington sits calmly before last week's winter snowstorm. Submitted photos

Russ LaPierre goes as far as the rocks allow in the lake.

WORTHINGTON

Power, school on
new year plans

By Peter Spotts

The new year is shaping up to be busy for the town as special town meetings, projects, and three phase power upgrades are all slated for 2021. Selectman Charles Rose said the completion of three phase power on Route 145 will open up new business opportunities for the town and provide a second source of power for the town in case of outages.

IMPROVEMENTS, page 13

BLANDFORD

Looking ahead to
new year in town

By Mary Kronholm

The end of 2020 brings hope to town officials, business owners and residents that 2021 will bring improvement, but also stay mindful about being safe and keeping the community safe from COVID-19. "I expect we'll see more of the same, we just put our minds to work, asked questions, took action to mitigate risks in line with anticipated success, and we were able to make things happen," Selectman Eric McVey said. "Challenges that as a town we'll rise to and apply creativity to resolve, while we look out for our neighbors and friends."

NEW YEAR, page 6

GOSHEN

Broadband, study
on tap for 2021

By Shelby Macri

While the town saw the impact of the pandemic early in 2020, essential services were kept running, a few projects were completed, and the town is looking forward to a brighter 2021. The town saw the addition of a new roof on the New Hingham Elementary School, completed repairs to the Transfer Station landfill project, and frequent updates to the town website to be user friendly during this time

MARIJUANA, page 3

BROADBAND, page 13

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WILLIAMSBURG

Engineering progress nears 25% for Greenway

By Peter Spotts

WILLIAMSBURG — The Mill River Greenway Committee has been making progress on design work for the project during COVID-19 and is looking to bring the Selectboard fully up to speed next month in a meeting with project engineers.

Committee Chairman Gaby Immerman told the board on Thursday, Jan. 28, the committee would like to meet with the board with VHB Engineers Matt Chase and Christine Champeau to go over the Route 9/Greenway plans for the 25% design, which is scheduled for completion in Dec. 2021 or Jan. 2022. This design discussion will cover next steps, geotechnical, structural, hydraulic assessment, and more.

“We just wanted to take a moment and keep you guys looped in,” Immerman said. “We’d like to find a time to bring the engineers to meet with you all directly.”

“I’d make a request that whatever you can do to get the Selectboard up to speed on what the topics will be, especially if there’s any money issues involved,” Selectman Bill Sayre said. “So, going into

the meeting we know as much as we can rather than during the meeting trying to catch up to speed.”

Nick Dines added Michael Trepanier, from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, should be in attendance as he’s been instrumental in helping the project.

“He’s a local hero because he advocated to the state to take over this project,” Dines said. “He’s very enthusiastic and he’d like to come here and also walk the route and do some experiential observation as well. That’s really important as well, I think.”

Immerman and Dines provided updates on a variety of projects linked to the Route 9 Greenway corridor area. VHB is designing a new water main for the Route 9 Corridor with \$28,000 approved by the Water & Sewer Commission. Immerman said the board should anticipate further design and construction document costs at a special or Annual Town Meeting later this year.

Chase is also looking into culvert work. Immerman and Dines said the addition of a culvert, as well as improvements to the culvert on Depot Road, could help

alleviate issues along the road.

Police Chief Denise Wickland also met with the board during the meeting. She said the department has had no issues with staying healthy at this time as everyone is following safety protocols. If someone does feel ill, they’ve been able to get tests to verify they do not have COVID-19. Wickland noted the department has received many emails and phone calls from residents with questions about the COVID-19 vaccine.

“We’re just being extra careful and doing what we need to do there,” Wickland said.

The town’s newest full-officer Peter Fisher is currently expected to not be in the upcoming class for the Police Academy. Wickland explained the class sizes have been cut by half due to COVID-19 and Fisher is on the waitlist for a spot after clearing his physical and physical ability test.

“If one of those spaces opens up... there is a chance he could get on the next class coming up or he will work on a waiver until the next class in next fall or early winter,” Wickland said.

The town will get bolstered traffic

enforcement from April 6 through April 18. Wickland said this is a great benefit to the town as the current department can be stretched thin during busy days depending on other calls coming in.

“We know how it goes where some days we’re not able to do any traffic enforcement because the day just gets busy,” she said.

The first mobilization of the grant took place earlier this winter and town had 52.5 hours of extra patrols paid by the state. Wickland reported there were several arrests made for operating under the influence of alcohol and drugs during these patrols and many speeding citations.

Wickland noted, for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting later this year, the department could sue upgraded computer systems. Currently, all but one computer in the station is outdated and can’t run all the state databases the department uses. For now, officers take turns using the one computer when needing particular database access, but Wickland is concerned about being reliant entirely on the one machine. Record management and daily reports are done on any of the station computers.

Preparing for COVID-19 vaccinations for town residents

WILLIAMSBURG — The State of Massachusetts is rolling out the COVID-19 vaccinations in three phases. Each phase has eligibility requirements with groups to be vaccinated in priority order. Currently the state is in Phase 1 and is vaccinating clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers, people in long-term care facilities, rest homes and assisted living facilities, emergency responders, congregate care settings and health care workers.

Phase 2 is scheduled to begin sometime in February and will cover vaccinations for people with two or more health conditions that make them high risk for COVID-19 complications, adults 75 years or older, residents and staff of public and private low income and affordable senior housing, educators, employees who work in retail, foodservice facilities, public works, and transportation, adults 65 years or older, and individuals with one health condition that puts them at

high risk.

Phase 3 covers the general public — those not covered in phase 1 or 2 — and is scheduled to begin in April.

At this time, the town is working with state approved regional vaccination sites. As vaccination enters Phase 2 and Phase 3, town officials will communicate with residents eligible under that phase about how best to sign up to get vaccinated. Residents should not sign-up until the state is in the phase under which they are

eligible. Residents will be turned away even if they sign up.

Please beware of scam emails, links, and websites regarding vaccinations. For more information, visit www.mass.gov/info-details/when-can-i-get-the-covid-19-vaccine.

In the meantime, please take care, wear a mask, and maintain social distance. Questions may be directed to Board of Health Chair Donna Gibson at 413-268-7421.

WESTHAMPTON

COMPLEX

from page 1

doors, and the board is hoping residents come to the meeting prepared. Dowling said the town will be sending out flyers and postcards to residents in the coming weeks with information about the Safety Complex Building and what the board plans to do with the project.

Additionally, Dowling is putting together a video for information on the Safety Complex; he’s trying to put together as much information presented concisely so the video isn’t too long. It’ll be uploaded to the town website in the coming weeks so residents can watch it before the STM. Since the meeting will be held in a drive-up manner, the board doesn’t want the meeting to be too long. It will also need to pass a ballot vote on March 13.

The last time this building was voted on at town meeting it got the two-thirds majority vote but didn’t get the ballot vote, so the project was put off.

“People are asking me what’s the backup plan if it’s not approved at both, and I say that there is no back up plan. If it’s not approved this year, we’ll bring it back again until it is approved, there is no alternative,” Dowling said. “It’ll cost 30% more if we try to bring the current building up to code, so we’re saving the town money by building a brand-new facility. We’ll keep bringing it back again, but it’ll be more expensive than it is now.”

He emphasized numbers and costs are at an all-time low, and the town may not get this opportunity again.

The current building was originally a Highway Garage built in 1948. There have been add-ons and renovations done since then to accommodate the department as it grew, but it’s not working for the Fire or Police services anymore. The garage space isn’t big enough for

the trucks to be inside in a comfortable way and there is no space between the lockers and the trucks. There are many problems with the current building and replacing it has been on the town’s Capital Plan since 2002.

This project has been thought of and planned for a long time and the board is excited the prices are low, giving the town a chance to finally make a new safety complex building. Especially for the Police Department, as they don’t have sufficient space currently, and have dealt patiently with the space they have.

“They take care of us. We need to take care of them,” Dowling said. “They need a safe and efficient place to work.”

For the last 20 or so years the town has been doing Capital Plan projects. The costs of some of those projects have been more than this building. The town has paid off their other debts and are currently debt free, so board would like to do this project while the costs are low, and they can focus on paying it back. The board is looking for a debt exclusion, which temporarily increases the tax rate specifically for this project.

With the town recently painting the town hall, installing a new roof on the Town Hall and Westhampton Elementary School, and a new fire truck, a new safety complex would finish off the town’s 20-year Capital Plan, and Dowling is confident now is the time.

The board will be holding informational meetings both online and in person leading up to the STM; residents are encouraged to attend these sessions so they can enter the STM with knowledge of the project already. Residents should look for informational flyers in the mail and a video and information on the town website, www.westhampton-ma.com.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

CONTRACT

from page 1

Worthington School Committee Chair Alison Todd and Principal/Superintendent Gretchen Morse-Dobosz both spoke about the benefits of the relationship so far and their hopes for continued cooperation between the two parties. Todd said it’s important to the town to keep nurturing a long-term relationship and connection that is mutual and beneficial for all.

“We talked about extending to a longer period of time to give both your committee and ours more predictability to be able to budget and plan,” Todd said. “It gives our communities more of a sense of community.”

“I know my kids have had really pleasant interactions with the kids coming from Worthington,” added HRSC member Collin Black of Williamsburg. “That’s the impression I’m getting anyway, it’s been a very positive experience.”

Interim Superintendent Michael Sullivan said the district and Worthington have been negotiating for an agreement extension, which would increase Worthington’s contribution to the district annually and allow for more predictable budget planning. Sullivan addressed the issue of whether the agreement would cover Central Office funding.

“There’s a separate agreement for that. That’s not part of this tuition agreement,” he said. “We will probably look at both of those together at some point. Both sides are really comfort-

able with what we’d like to propose going forward, which is a decline in the amount of service being provided to Worthington over time.”

The new agreement is aiming to make Worthington more aligned with the per pupil expenditure allocated to the in-district towns. Sullivan also addressed Goshen Finance Committee Chair Dawn Scaparotti’s question if other towns will have their costs per pupil discussed as well after the district finishes talking with Worthington about its cost per student and tuition.

“Yes, without a doubt,” he said.

Morse-Dobosz said the school sent four students to Hampshire Regional from the sixth grade this year. They anticipate no more than 10 in a class, as some of students choose to attend Central Berkshire or Northampton.

“It seems like a good bond is forming with Hampshire Regional,” she said. “I know you guys took a risk on Worthington, allowing us to join your community, and I hope that has felt worthwhile to you and it has felt great to us. It’s been a real natural fit for our kids getting what they need and feeling welcomed.”

“I would imagine we would see the relationship building over time,” said HRSC Chair Margaret Larson. “Families hear from other families that they’re having a good experience at the regional level.”

“It seems like a good bond is forming with Hampshire Regional... I hope that has felt worthwhile to you and it has felt great to us.

– Principal/Superintendent Gretchen Morse-Dobosz

OBITUARY

James H. Trudeau

James H. Trudeau was born on Dec. 24, 1950, son of Louise and Eugene Trudeau. He graduated from Chester High School in 1968 and was honorably discharged from the United States Army. He leaves behind his wife of 46 years, Debra (Austin) Trudeau. He was the father to Sarah (Trudeau) DaSilva and her husband Adam; grandfather “Gaga” to Adam James DaSilva and Malaney Page DaSilva.

James worked for Mead Paper Mill in Lee, MA for many years and he also served on the Chester Fire Department and was Captain of the Muster Team. His interest included his baseball team, Lee bowling league, and spending time with his friends and family; especially his grandchildren whom he lived for and spent their Friday nights together. He was an avid fan of the New York Yankees. Jim was a



lung transplant recipient of 17 years; a great gratitude goes out to the many years of care from Brigham and Women’s Hospital and the transplant team. Jim was able to fulfill his last wish and die peacefully at his home surrounded by his loving family. His sister-in-law, Maureen Meiers, a retired nurse, flew in from Arizona to help care for him and kept him comfortable his last few loving days here.

There will be a Celebration of Life later on this year for James. In lieu of flowers, donations in James’ name may be directed to Brigham and Women’s Hospital, c/o Brigham and Women’s Transplant Department, giving.brighamandwomens.org, or mail to 116 Huntington Ave. 3rd Floor, Boston, MA 02116. Arrangements are under the direction of Firtion Adams FS, 76 Broad St., Westfield, MA 01085.

DEATH NOTICE

TRUDEAU, JAMES H.

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Celebration of Life to be held at later date.

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WORTHINGTON

Vaccine information for residents

WORTHINGTON — The town has received many inquiries about getting the Covid-19 Vaccine. The current state guidance can be found on the Massachusetts State Web Site at www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine.

On Monday, Feb. 1, people age 75 or older are eligible to make appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations. There is no date set yet for the next group — people 65 or older or people with two or more comorbidities. The vaccines themselves continue in short supply.

At this time, there are two regional COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Hampshire County — The Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst or The Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street, Northampton.

To register visit a link on the city websites: www.amherstcovid19.org or www.northamptonma.gov/vaccineclinics. Additional clinics

will be scheduled during the coming weeks based upon weekly federal and state allotments and will follow the phased guidelines as defined by The Department of Public Health.

They will also be offering the second dose of the Moderna vaccine on or after 28 days later to anyone who receives their first dose at our clinics. If individuals need assistance with online registration, please call 413-587-1219 for Northampton or 413-259-2425 for Amherst and leave a detailed message. A health department representative will get back to you within two business days.

Please note that the vaccine is free to individuals and is being provided to the states by the federal government. Sites can bill for a small administration fee to cover the cost of running clinic and insurance information will be requested. However, no person will be turned away due to lack of insurance.

RELIEF

from page 1

The town also had several people take time each week to deliver meals to those who couldn’t pick them up at The Rabbit Hole including Evan Johnson, Pat Kennedy, Mary Kay Farley, and Paul Dunlevy.

“I think it’s been a combination of everyone doing their piece is what’s making this work and be so successful. It’s definitely a collaborative asset for the whole community,” said Elaine Chase.

“Without their generosity, frankly, it wouldn’t have happened, and it was really driven by them from the get-go,” Selectman Charley Rose said. “We’re definitely lucky that the Chase’s bought The Rabbit Hole and are super community minded. They did a little Christmas Toy Drive, and they arranged to bring Thanksgiving dinner to people on their own.”

Each week, those interested in meals leave a message with Rose to reserve a meal. The Rabbit Hole prepares the meals on Sunday and then they are picked up or delivered. While most people using the service are town residents, there are also residents from Chesterfield, Cummington, and Goshen

who have ordered meals.

“It’s less now than it was. When we started last march and went into June, we were doing it twice a week and we were getting close to 50 meals a pop,” Rose said. “Lately, it’s been more like 18 or so. It varies honestly. It’s pretty much the same group of people every week.”

Chase added, “It’s worked out great. Everyone seems to be very happy when they come to pick up their food or it’s delivered to them.”

Rose also does weekly calls to the regulars to make sure they don’t forget to order. Every several weeks there’s a robocall to remind residents the meals are being offered. There was a break over the summer where meals weren’t offered, but for most of the past year since COVID-19 started the option has been there for residents.

“If somebody from another neighboring town calls, it’s fine,” Rose said.

Meals will be available for pick-up once a week, from 1 to 1:30 p.m. each Sunday.

To place a meal, call or text 413-238-1625 and leave a message with the number of meals needed, or contact relief@worthingtonma.us.

MIDDLEFIELD

MIDDLEFIELD SENIOR CENTER

Lunch is served at the Senior Center, 169 Skyline Trail, Middlefield, each Wednesday at noon.

A \$3 donation is suggested. Reservations should be made, and meal choice stated, by calling and leaving a message at 413-623-9990 the

Monday before. Pick-up and delivery are available.

The menu on Wednesday, Feb. 10, is baked pollock with crumb topping and tartar sauce, Brussel sprouts, brown rice, whole wheat bread, and vanilla pudding with whipped topping.

OPINION

GARDEN

from page 6

interested, read on.

You can purchase plants through the mail or try sprouting your own from sweet potatoes purchased from the grocery store. Dick Raymond, author of my favorite gardening book of all time, “Garden Way’s Joy of Gardening” (Storey Publishing \$24.95), has some great tips for doing this: Seven or eight weeks prior to Memorial Day, simply cut the spuds in half length-wise and lay them down in moist peat moss in a shallow tray. Cover with plastic wrap and place in a sunny window until sprouting occurs. Slips should be separated and planted about six inches deep, 12 to 15 inches apart from one another. He advises to water well for the first two weeks; after that sweet potato plants are reportedly somewhat drought tolerant. When fertilizing, choose a formulation that is a bit lower in nitrogen, otherwise you will have lots of vines at the expense of sweet potatoes.

Dig up your bounty on a dry day, being extra careful not to damage the skin. Don’t leave them exposed to the sun for more than an hour and don’t wash

them either. Picky, aren’t they? Fresh sweet potatoes aren’t all that sweet, a curing period of two weeks in the dark at 70 to 80 degrees and at high humidity will bring out the great flavor we are accustomed to. Long-term storage should be at temperatures around 60 degrees.

To make sweet potato fries simply cut the root into thick wedges, then toss them with seasoned olive oil (or a favorite salad dressing). Bake on a cookie sheet at 350 degrees for one hour, flipping occasionally. Some ketchup as a dip may help reluctant kids to give the “funny orange French fries” a try.

It’s my hope that you all enjoy growing sweet potatoes from “scratch,” so to speak!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to ekennedy@turley.com with “Gardening Question” in the subject line.

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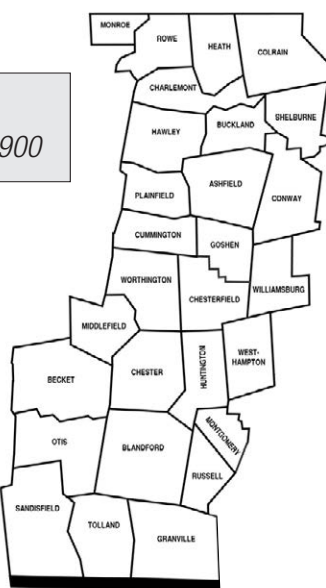
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CHESTERFIELD



Garrett Bak of Chesterfield Cub Scout Pack 705, with his father Jordan Bak, pick up trash along Route 143.
Submitted photos



Corbin Liimatainen holds his new toolbox he made.



Trevor Christenson with his homemade bird feeder.



Joseph Gagne working with his father on whittling chip.

Scouting through adversity

CHESTERFIELD — The Chesterfield Cub Scout pack 705 has faced many difficulties in the past year. Mainly due to the pandemic, the pack has not been able to meet in person by the request of its charter organization. Pack numbers have dwindled down to five registered kids for the 2021 year. Those that have remained are working hard with their families to earn each accomplishment. Pack Bear group has earned their whittling chip, which taught knife safety skills, and the kids whittled bars of soap into animal shapes. Paws for Action was where kids, with their families, came up with emergency numbers list and also a plan for their families in case of emergency. For this adventure they also, with their own families, went out and did some community clean-up projects, mostly picking up trash roadside in Chesterfield.

The Pack will soon be planning a virtual court of honor to present adventure loops earned to date. The ever-popular Pine Wood Derby is planned for this year as well, either by having a live feed or recording it and sending to the families.

Broadband, website issues addressed by Selectboard

By Shelby Macri

CHESTERFIELD — The Broadband project construction started on Sept. 28 last year, and Town Administrator Susan Labrie updated the Selectboard that the project is about a week and a half behind schedule at its meeting on Monday, Feb. 1.

The board is expecting the project to be completed this summer. They hoped to have the project done by July this year, but the winter weather may impact the construction schedule and date of completion. The board said there are six areas that are being checked and looked at before construction is continuing there, and the work is going well. They also discussed the cost

for the Municipal Light Plant hut that was installed in the summer of 2019.

“The price of the hut is not cut and dry,” Labrie said. “There was the cost of purchasing the physical building, interior work and wiring, and the generator as its backup electrical supply.

The discussion of payment was discussed briefly at the meeting, but is an ongoing discussion from 2019.

The construction for the town is split into four fiber service area. The first area is in the center of town and Labrie said it should be connected and tested early this month, and connections to homes are expected to start mid-way through this month. The board shared the Town Hall

should be connected to the network two meetings from now and the board members will be able to test it in the Town Hall.

They also discussed residents signing up for the network after construction and added information on the town website, townofchesterfieldma.com, to sign up. Selectman Don Willard said he has been answering many questions from residents about the issue on the town’s Facebook page. The board said they had the IT Department try to fix the site as it had connection troubles and many pop-up windows. While fixing the site, it is now not recognized in the Google search bar. For those who want to get onto the web-

site they need to type the full address into the search bar, and do not let it auto fill because the search won’t recognize it. The best way to access the town website is to enter townofchesterfieldma.com into the address bar directly and not via a Google search.

The board discussed switching the network they use or upgrading the network they use so the site works better. There were a few options for the website and the board agreed that the town website was necessary to fix, and that they’d put it in an article for the town meeting. For right now people will have better luck accessing the website by typing the web address in by hand.

BECKET

Jacob’s Pillow hosts virtual dance party

BECKET— Jacob’s Pillow will host DANCE ON!, a virtual community dance party via Zoom on Saturday, Feb. 20, from 8p.m. to 9 p.m. The event is free to attend; all donations will be equally shared between Berkshire Immigrant Center in Pittsfield and Volunteers in Medicine in Great Barrington in recognition of their work providing direct, essential services to Berkshire County during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Choreographer Christal Brown will host and New York-based DJ DP One will perform a live set. DANCE ON! is presented as part of Discover Pittsfield’s 10x10 Upstreet Arts Festival, celebrating its 10th year with virtual shows, performances, outdoor activities, and more.

This virtual dance party offers attendees a chance to celebrate and enjoy

music and dancing together, from home. Partygoers can use the chat function in Zoom to connect with friends and community members, and anyone can volunteer to be featured on screen-or simply watch, listen, and enjoy.

Brown, the founding artistic director of INSPIRIT, is an acclaimed speaker and coach in addition to choreographer and dancer, and brings all these skills to her role as the virtual host of DANCE ON!, encouraging and cultivating a festive and uplifting mood alongside a live set by DJ DP One. A performer at New York City venues and clubs, including Le Poisson Rouge and 10AK, DP has also toured with recording artists such as Lauryn Hill and John Legend. DP’s dance-friendly sets are packed with Top 40 hits, Hip-Hop, R&B, Reggae, Classics, Funk, Latin, and more.

Jacob’s Pillow has participated in Discover Pittsfield’s 10x10 Festival for the past five years. To celebrate the Festival’s 10-year anniversary and first-ever virtual programming, Dance On! will highlight two local service organizations. Berkshire Immigrant Center supports individuals and families through the immigration process and beyond to lead engaged lives in the Berkshires. Volunteers in Medicine provides free comprehensive healthcare to the income-qualified and uninsured or under-insured, with an integrated approach to wellness that brings patients together to build support systems and create positive lifestyle change.

To RSVP, donate, or learn more about DANCE ON!, visit <http://www.jacobspillow.org/dance-on>.

Submissions are always welcome.

Send us your news and photos.

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